

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for March 21, 2001

Agenda Items

- Briefing on Revised Design Development for Edmunds Station

Commissioners Present

Matthew Kitchen
Carolyn Law
Jay Lazerwitz
Jack Mackie
Don Royse
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Allen Parker, Sound Transit
John Walser, Sound Transit
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign

The meeting began with introductions all around, and then moved into the first agenda item. Matthew Kitchen chaired the meeting in Rick Sundberg's absence. Members elected to hold off on reviewing and approving meeting notes until the next meeting.

Briefing on Revised Design Development for Edmunds Station

John Walser, Sound Transit
Larry Black, Arai Jackson

John Walser explained that this briefing is a follow-up to the January 31st, 2001 briefing at which the Panel requested additional refinement of the Edmunds design before recommending approval. LRRP comments at that time included a suggestion to simplify the design overall, pull the pylons further from the platform and closer to each intersection, provide a landscaping plan, and provide more information on the station amenities and other elements on the platform. We have revised the design to address these concerns and hope to get your recommendation to proceed tonight.

Larry Black continued the presentation with a summary of the changes since the last meeting:

- Simplification of design details of the canopy
- Further emphasis on the garden trellis concept
- Layering of elements in keeping with the Craftsman style
- Constructability analysis

He also drew LRRP attention to several new drawings showing perspective renderings of each of the three MLK at-grade stations and several lighting drawings, and proceeded to describe other aspects of the design:

- Canopy glazing is the same 4' modules as before, but the framing is slightly changed to emphasize the Craftsman-style pergola.
- Looking at various lighting options including linear fluorescent lights, point source lights, or a combination of the two. Point sources would be on grid lines; the linear lights would be on the underside of the purlins to keep them inconspicuous.
- Simplified the structural framing to graduate down from smallest at the top to largest at the bottom. May taper the beam up slightly so it reads more as horizontal. Plate in front of the column to cover up the conduit. Frames would be shop-welded and painted.

- Drainage system is the same, but detailed differently with collection boxes between two plates.

At this point Jack asked whether one of the stations makes use of the water, letting it go into the ground as opposed to sending it into a formal sewer collection system. John Walser answered that the idea has been discussed but that the City/Seatran has raised objections to it, and requested that these areas be paved. Jack said he thinks the Panel should advocate for featuring the water versus hiding it, and also press for more green space and less hardscape. Larry continued with the design description:

- The masonry bases are slightly reduced in size from before. Different finishes are being considered for the concrete walls between the bases.
- Windscreens have been reduced in height, but still standard 2' x 2' and 2' x 4' glazing panels. They will be attached to the columns separately and will have a gap between the trellis and the top of the wall.
- A lighting study was done, showing a preference for a combination scheme. Don Royse asked whether the wattage is the same or different, to which Larry answered it is about the same or possibly a little higher in the combination scheme.
- Nothing new with respect to signage except that the signs are no longer integrated into the windscreen.
- The pylons have been pulled out closer to the intersections, and the artwork brought closer to the ground.

Norie Sato described the art concepts:

- The pylons serve as a series of stages for free-form narratives. The figure serves as a guardian or gatekeeper, each telling a story. The column will be lit, the pediment refers to "home" and the architecture in Columbia City, and there is also room for landscaping.
- Within the pediment is metalwork akin to a line drawing, with subject matter or form that relates to the neighborhood history and people; e.g. the old Fireworks company that used to be in Columbia City.
- We're working hard to relate the pylons with the artwork, but this hasn't quite jelled yet.
- There has also been lots of discussion about the railings. These will direct where pedestrians should and shouldn't walk. Simplified railings at the entrance ramps, and more "designed" ones between the canopies on the platform. The Panel then moved into general discussion.

Discussion

- Has there been a decision to choose one railing design or a series for different areas? (ST hasn't decided yet. We could transition to the language of the windscreens—from organic to the lattice design and back to organic again. There is also the railing between the tracks to contend with.)
- I like the way you are breaking up the mass. What about the sidewalk itself? Break it into zones with some related to the station, some to the area streetscape. (The plan is to use 2' x 2' cast in place scored concrete, but we're waiting for more information and feedback from the Wayfinding group. We've also been working several months on the "braid" for all stations, which is a tactile path showing where to wait and wait for the train. The braid will start where the patron first enters at the ticket vending machine. This is still conceptual. We want to make it have visual and textural interest, and will try out some "mock-ups" with the ADA group. The idea is to have an enriched braid within the fare paid zone. The Panel is welcome to view the mock-up when we have it done.)

- I'm thinking of the paving on the green line—the butterfly station. The truncated domes provide texture, information, and design all at the same time. (We'll look at paving patterns at 90%. There is room to do planing at the ramps up to the platform. We don't yet know if the gore is available to plant or not. For the plazas at Edmunds and Alaska, we're looking at screening that is similar to the trellis, but without the horizontal pieces—more like pickets with a curve. Plus some perforated metal panels behind it. The screen would be for plants to climb on. We haven't yet selected tree species—that is the next step.)
- Where will there be the reference to Columbia City that the community and we have asked for? (Sound Transit will engage with the pedestrian corridor to Columbia City for three blocks and try to match lighting fixtures there. But we're not moving forward with lighting design until there is a decision on overhead or underground wires.)
- In replicating the historic light fixtures, let's try to improve upon them and direct the light more efficiently—there are models that focus the light downward, and not let it spill up and out like the older globes do.
- What is your schedule for completion of the design work? (We'll know more in a week or two whether we'll be halting design now at 60% or moving forward to 90%. If we stop at 60% now, design work will pick up again in a couple of years. In any case, engineering is going to 90%.)
- Decisions relative to undergrounding should certainly wait until we know. We want to have the undergrounding—better to wait and try to get it.
- What is your direction as far as side wind protection? (We'd like to provide it, but aren't able to at this station given the depth of the platform and physical constraints of the site. This is unique to Edmunds.)
- I really like the "fitted" configuration of the canopy, but am nervous about the color. In the model made of light wood, you really see the depth and detail of the joinery, but this feels too heavy in dark blue. Seems like we should start with design and then go to color. (The matter is on hold, but we have looked at a lighter blue. These drawings are deceptive. Portland uses dark blue and it shows up quite well.)
- Will you show accents in a different color? (That is a possibility.)
- Dark blue will reduce the depth of shadow—there is no question about that.
- You should conduct some color studies of this.
- Why the stainless steel drainpipe? The modern quality of that is not compatible with the Craftsman ethic.
- Actually, I like the stainless steel. You'll see that downspout flashing from a distance, or in a car as you drive by!
- I also like it, especially if the water "does something." The canopy overall is much improved. Looks very nice. I'm wondering if you shouldn't design the horizontal flange pieces to transition with the other pieces better?
- The design is much improved with a clear hierarchy of elements. But the beam appears much skinnier at just the spot where the force applies. Make this larger here.
- Yes, draw that one piece down further.
- What about the planters? (They are at the end of the canopy sections.)
- Is the glass at eye level? What is the scale of the figure in your model? (The glass is higher than eye level. The planter is 18" off the ground.)
- The other wall is too low to lean against.
- The leaning rail interferes with the trellis—look at integrating them better. I also support the idea of lighter coloration. Why the cantilevered beam at the end of the canopy? An open trellis extends the sense of enclosure, but this doesn't. (We may or may not have the cantilevered beam.) I also prefer a simpler railing, especially down the middle.
- I think I would go the other direction—more detail.

- Tie the railing design into the station regardless.
- I'm concerned the railing designs will read as too opaque, and as more of a fence or wall, than a railing. Remember, people are very concerned about light rail dividing the community.
- The railing is not likely to be opaque. If the artist is going to work on the railing, let the design be exuberant; if it is to be purely functional, let the design be simple. Maybe the middle railing is a good opportunity for an artist-designed railing.
- I like the variety of railings and tying them in with the trellis, but it is most important to have something good facing the community and automobile traffic. (We'll be having the same conversation about Royal Brougham and Lander stations! That team is keeping the middle very simple. Remember, the middle railing will also be below your eye level when standing on the platform.
- Designers should also be very clear about intent—why are the railings which are located where people can touch them, simple; whereas the railings in the middle where you can't touch them, are elaborate? And why pickets? (The artist didn't intend for the railing to be artwork. These are just ideas for the architects to play with, and are not a focus of the artist's time. She wouldn't be fabricating them.)
- Maybe the railing goes up to 5' high in places? Yes, keep the intention clear. (This is a system-wide element for the corridor. And remember that Operations will be hanging signs on the railing that say "Don't cross" or some such language.)
- I'm still not convinced of the need for intricate fencing.
- An artist-designed railing could be simple and thoughtfully designed.
- A comment was made by another reviewer in the IDR that has me concerned—that person wondered if all the railings might be too reminiscent of the security bars installed over doors and windows in parts of Columbia City and the Rainier Valley. What message are we potentially sending with all these railings/bars?
- That is a valid concern. Regular spacing to keep people out is a hallmark of those security bars, so it seems to me that these railings ought to present a different rhythm so the two aren't confused.
- Where is the Panel's direction on this? We aren't giving consistent advice!
- What if the railing continued down the whole corridor? (That won't happen because the Fire Department needs access across the street.)
- I'm happy to see the sculpture come down from the top of the pylon. Re: the railings, maybe you should let the trellis be the focus with simple running railing beside it.
- Yes, the simpler the better. I like the sculpture but am still having trouble imagining the pylons, the artwork, and the railings all together.
- At a minimum, the trellis, the approach railing, and the platform railing need to look like they are coming from the same family.
- Start your design from the trellis and then move outward from there.
- Shrubbery in those planters will require a fair amount of maintenance, and this is another level of cost and care. Is ST up to it? (We have no control over that at this time.)

John Walser added that the last time they presented Edmunds to the Panel, the Edmunds Street redesign was also presented. We have since heard from the community and subsequently gotten direction from Seatran to proceed with the design that has NE 32nd closed off. But they have asked that we plant no trees in the former right-of-way.

- That street should be vacated.
- Another thought on the pylons—they look like they are being designed in elevation view, but they will be approached from an oblique angle. Design with that view in mind.

Action

The Panel thanks Arai Jackson and Sound Transit for the presentation, and expresses appreciation for the direction that you have taken with the design since the last review. We recommend approval of the design as presented, noting that the design is much improved and the fittings are working well as part of the Craftsman-style approach to the station design. For the next phase of design, the Panel suggests further development of:

- *The various railings, using the trellis as a starting point for design;*
- *Canopy color (the Panel preferring a lighter color)—suggesting color studies prior to making a final decision;*
- *Design and massing of the pylons and related artwork from the perspective of the pedestrian and how the pylons are approached from the street;*
- *Keeping the leaning rail separate from the trellis windscreen, and yet still considering the aesthetic impact of the two in such close proximity; and*
- *The extended beam that cantilevers from the end of the canopy—how lighting will be addressed, and the aesthetics of the extension when there is no comparable extension of the pergola.*

The Panel requests another briefing at 90% design completion. If design work is suspended prior to 90%, the Panel requests a synopsis of key design issues for the entire Corridor in order to provide direction for any decisions that may get made in the next 2-3 years prior to construction.

The Panel continued to discuss the possibility of design suspending at 60% and suggested that a future LRRP meeting be devoted to discussing and documenting where we are in the design process today, including affirming specific design directions and providing direction where design is still evolving. Sound Transit acknowledged they also have concerns about preserving the quality of the MLK Corridor design. Mimi expressed concern about the increasing likelihood that underground wiring will not be provided along the Corridor, and there was discussion about City Light's financial status and ability to fund undergrounding or not. Panel members suggested that the issue may be important enough to take back to the individual Commissions for further discussion and action augmenting the LRRP work.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.